

MINUTES

OFF-ROAD VEHICLE TRAILS ADVISORY BOARD MEETING

Holiday Inn Lansing South

6820 South Cedar Street

Lansing, Michigan

May 12, 2004

Chairman, Dick Ranney called the meeting of the Off-Road Vehicle Trails Advisory Board to order at 6:37 p.m. on Wednesday, May 12, 2004 in Lansing, Michigan.

Members Present:

Dick Ranney, Chair

Glenn Moll, Vice Chair

Marlia Dielman

Jason Dinsmore for John Ford

Under Sheriff Billy E. Spencer for Sheriff Nelson J. Cannon

Members Absent:

Bill Hunyadi

Staff Present:

Jim Radabaugh, State Trails Coordinator, Lansing

Steve Kubisiak, ORV Program Manager, Lansing

Richard Kennedy, FMFM, Lansing

Sharon Maynard, Grants, Contracts and Customer Systems, Lansing

Lieutenant Creig Grey, Law Enforcement Division, Lansing

Lieutenant Walt Mikula, Law Enforcement Division, Roscommon

Sergeant Jean Davis, Law Enforcement Division, Roscommon

Pete Lundborg, Silver Lake State Park

USDA Forest Service Staff Present:

Rose Ingram, Huron-Manistee National Forest, Cadillac

Russ Bacon, Huron-Manistee National Forest, Baldwin

Chairman Ranney announced that Sheriff Jerry Cannon should be back for the next meeting and thanked Under Sheriff Spencer for acting as his alternate in his absence. He wished him well in his upcoming retirement.

Minutes

Acknowledged Minutes of the February 11, 2004 ORV Trails Advisory Board Meeting.

Under Sheriff Spencer made a motion, supported by Mr. Dinsmore, to accept the minutes of the February, 2004 Off-Road Vehicle Trails Advisory Board Meeting. Motion unanimously carried.

OLD BUSINESS

Legislation Update – **Mr. Ranney** reported he met with Representative Farrah and her staff on March 9, 2004, along with representatives of the Michigan Motorcycle Dealers Association, their lobbyist, and Department staff to discuss language changes to the Off-Road Vehicle (ORV) Act.

Mr. Radabaugh added the Department is continuing to work on draft language with Representative Farrah on the concept of simplifying the distribution of funds and providing flexibility to respond to program needs as the ultimate goal. The language is still being drafted and is under review. It is expected to be introduced in the next month or two.

ORV Safety Education Program Update -- **Lieutenant Creig Grey** reported he is currently working on grant application materials with Grants, Contracts and Customer Systems. He noted the process of preparing the application materials has taken longer than anticipated due to Department review and approval process, but is hopeful applications will be available to potential grant sponsors soon.

Discussion ensued regarding the Safety Training Program and ORV related accidents.

Mr. Ranney expressed concern with the lack of progress being made on the ORV Safety Training Program. He read a letter that he intends to send to the Chief of Law Enforcement.

Mr. Dinsmore made a motion, supported by Under Sheriff Spencer, in support of Chairman Ranney sending a letter to the Chief of Law Enforcement concerning the ORV Safety Training Program. Motion unanimously carried.

NEW BUSINESS

ORV Plan – **Mr. Kubisiak** introduced Dr. Charles Nelson from Michigan State University who is under contract to update Michigan's Off-Road Vehicle Plan. **Dr. Nelson** thanked the board and noted they will play a key role in the plan update process. He gave a power point presentation highlighting key features of the original plan, passed studies and regulations. **Dr. Nelson** provided an overview of topic areas to be addressed in the plan update, provided a project schedule, and answered questions. **Mr Ranney** thanked Dr. Nelson.

Spending Plan – **Mr. Kubisiak** reported the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) budget office requested a plan to spend down approximately \$2.5 million dollars of the balance in the Off-Road Vehicle Trail Improvement Fund. He said the proposed spending plan addresses three major program needs:

1. A system wide travel management sign upgrade
2. Gladwin ORV trail improvements
3. Motorized trail regulatory sign review

Mr. Kubisiak said the travel management sign upgrade is estimated to cost approximately \$2 million dollars and would involve replacing the current trail marking system with carsonite type posts, with appropriate recreation symbols. He said this enhancement will provide for a more durable, uniform and attractive sign system, and will help with law enforcement.

The Gladwin ORV trail receives tremendous use and is in need of significant improvements to address environmental issues relating to seasonally wet soil conditions unique to this Management Unit. Engineering cost estimates are complete. Estimated cost of improvements is approximately \$500,000. He added that these enhancements will improve trail drainage and stabilize a permanent trail bed that will be better able to sustain motorized trail use in the long term.

The motorized trail regulatory sign review will initiate the second phase of the motorized trail sign enhancement program. This effort will be coordinated with, and cost shared with, the snowmobile program. Estimated cost share is approximately \$50,000.

Mr. Dinsmore asked if the ORV fund is protected and noted what happened to the waterways fund. **Mr. Kubisiak** said the ORV fund is a restricted fund and added that is why the Department has developed the spending plan.

Discussion ensued regarding the proposed spending plan and trail signing.

Ms. Dielman made a motion, supported by Mr. Dinsmore, recommending the Department involve knowledgeable board members, or grant sponsors, when making decisions regarding trail signage. Motion unanimously carried.

STAFF REPORTS

Forest, Mineral and Fire Management

Steve Kubisiak reported he recently spoke with Bill Hunyadi who agreed to replace Adam Bump on the Board. Mr. Hunyadi is the new regional Wildlife Biologist for the Ruffed Grouse Society. His territory includes Michigan, Indiana, Ohio and Kentucky. He reported that Errol Lee has resigned from the Board and the Department is searching for a replacement. He noted that Mr. Lee represented the public at-large and that this is a neutral position. He asked the Board to let him know if they have any recommendations for potential candidates.

Mr. Kubisiak referred the Board to a memorandum that was sent to all State employees from Steven E. Chester, Director of the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), regarding the 2004 Ozone Action. He said this is as an information item and urged the ORV community to take this under consideration. More details are available on the DEQ web site at www.michigan.gov/deqozoneaction.

Mr. Kubisiak referred the Board to a letter received from Mr. Thomas A. Schmidt, Forest Supervisor, Hiawatha National Forest, requesting the Department to consider designating segments of the Haywire and Coalwood Grade(s) as part of the State designated ORV trail system. He also referred them to a letter the Department sent in response to this request and noted the Department would like advice from the ORV Trails Advisory Board and Snowmobile Advisory Committee. This item will be placed on the August meeting agenda.

Mr. Radabaugh reported the position descriptions for the two trail vacancies have been finalized, justifications have been approved, and they are under review by Human Resources and Civil Service. He expects the positions to be advertised by the last week of May and said he is hopeful that the positions will be filled by mid July. He added the Department has been authorized to hire two state workers to cover essential trail duties this summer. He said these positions will assist the Unit Managers with trail inspections and trail event related activities. He said that one position is already filled and is hopeful the second one will be filled after the interviews are completed next week.

Grants, Contracts and Customer Systems

Sharon Maynard, Grants, Contracts and Customer Systems, Lansing reported that ORV licenses are once again available through the point of sales terminals, and are available at over 1700 outlets throughout the state. She said the licenses are also available from participating ORV dealerships and on the web through E-license. She noted that ORV license sales through E-license dropped 34% last year from approximately 1500 to 800. She reported there were approximately 150,000 ORV licenses sold in 2001, with stable sales in 2002 and 2003 at approximately 165,000 each year. 2004 year-to-date sales are approximately 60,000.

Ms. Maynard reported their office is communicating with the license agents and have sent ORV guides to them for distribution. She said she recognizes the need to work with the agents to

improve the distribution of the ORV guides, and is reviewing agent performance criteria. She added they are also working to improve the quality of license stock used in the point of sale terminals.

Parks and Recreation Bureau

Peter Lundborg, Silver Lake State Park, Mears reported that he is working to resolve congestion problems at the safety check station by constructing a by-pass lane. He noted the project is funded through an ORV grant. He expressed concern with trends that suggest ORV related accidents and fatalities are increasing at Silver Lake State Park each year. He said he is looking for ideas from the board on how to improve safety at the park. He added that he will be bringing this issue to the Parks and Recreation Bureau Management Team for advice and noted a potential need to reinstitute a local Advisory Committee.

USDA Forest Service

Rose Ingram, Huron-Manistee National Forest, Cadillac, reported that Leanne Martin was recently appointed as the new Forest Supervisor for the Huron-Manistee National Forest. **Ms. Ingram** reported that a decision notice and finding of no significant impact for the Horseshoe-Holton Motorcycle Trail has been posted on their web site, and noted the decision is currently in the appeal period.

Public Appearance

Mike Maurer, Lansing Motorcycle Club, Williamston said that his club has begun shopping for liability insurance and noted that the costs have doubled from last year. He believes this increase is a result of the need to include trail exposure in order to meet insurance requirements for the grant program. He believes if the window of exposure under the grant program could be shortened it would help reduce insurance costs. He urged the other clubs involved in the trail maintenance program to begin shopping for their insurance early. **Mr. Maurer** also spoke to the 2004 ORV Trails Advisory Board mission, and is supportive of clubs working together to resolve issues relating to the ORV program.

Bill Chapin, Cycle Conservation Club of Michigan, Rives Junction believes it was the legislature's intent to require a hands-on training component in the ORV Safety Education Program. He urged the DNR to not abandon this requirement. **Mr. Chapin** questioned the proposed spending plan and believes that regulatory signs should be the priority. He noted that insurance costs have doubled since last year. **Mr. Chapin** believes the DNR should provide tort immunity to sponsors, and shorten grant sponsor liability exposure through application of accepted work doctrine.

Bill Gilbert, Michigan ATV Safety Association (MASA), Burton believes it will cost more than \$20.00 per student to provide a comprehensive ORV training program. He said he currently charges \$35.00 per student and that he could not provide the training for \$20.00. He does not support a paper program and believes that a hands-on component is important.

Tom Craig, ATV Off-Road Club of Michigan, Warren expressed concerns with the ATV trail system and does not believe it is ATV friendly. He expressed concerns with trail width in some areas and said that stumps along the trails are a safety hazard. He suggested the DNR inspect the trails on ATVs. He does not like ORV Routes.

Pat Kinney, Great Lakes Four Wheel Drive Association, Midland said members of his organization do not use the designated ORV route system, and that other than Silver Lake State Park nothing in Michigan holds their organization's interest. He said members of his organization go out of state to find challenging off-road riding opportunities for full size vehicles.

Paul Mulder, Great Lakes Four Wheel Drive Association, Harrison distributed photographs of toilet buildings at several ORV trailheads. He expressed concerns with the lack of off-season maintenance and reported that the toilet building at Evart is closed due to vandalism. He said he cleaned the toilet building at the North Branch Trail. He asked if the North Branch trailhead is supposed to be maintained year round because it also serves as a snowmobile trail. He said the parking lot was not plowed. **Mr. Radabaugh** said the ORV trailheads are maintained by short-term workers only during the peak use season and will verify maintenance practices at the North Branch Trailhead with the Management Unit. **Mr. Mulder** expressed concerns with the ORV plan and noted a need for a verifiable trail condition assessment. He expressed concerns with the spending plan.

John Stears, Vicksburg is critical of the Departments management of the Off-Road Vehicle Trails Program and Safety Education Program. He expressed concern with elimination of the hands-on component of the safety training program. He is critical of the Department's effort to update the ORV plan, opposes single use designation of the Horseshoe-Holton Motorcycle trail and believes modern equipment should be used to maintain the trails.

The meeting adjourned at 9:37 p.m.

Next Meeting

August 11, 2004, Lansing Holiday Inn-South, 6820 South Cedar Street, Lansing, Michigan

Public Present:

Mike Maurer, Lansing Motorcycle Club (LMC)
Pat Kinne, Great Lakes 4-Wheel Drive Association (GLFWDA)
Paul Mulder, GLFWDA
Peter Christenhusz, GLFWDA
Thomas Dunn, American Motorcycle Association (AMA), District 14
Ernie Brooks
Tom Gallagher, MI Recreational Vehicle Riders Association
Bill Chapin, Cycle Conservation Club (CCC)
Greg Yager, CCC
Hal Folk, CCC

Ted Del Solar, Denton Owners Group
Donald Craig, Mid-Michigan Dealer's Association
Jeff VanCamp, ATV Off-Road Club of Michigan
Tom Craig, ATV Off-Road Club of Michigan
Steve Gradowski, GLFWDA
Bill Gilbert, MI ATV Safety Association
Dr. Chuck Nelson, MSU
Jeff Hunt, LMC
Jim Hunt, LMC
Virginia Hunt, LMC
Bill Muggelberg, Off-Road Club of Michigan